

IRS News Release

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Prepare for Hurricanes by Safeguarding Tax Records

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Podcast: [English](#) [Spanish](#)

WASHINGTON — With the 2009 hurricane season now underway, the Internal Revenue Service encourages individuals and businesses to safeguard themselves by taking a few simple steps.

Create a Backup Set of Records Electronically

Taxpayers should keep a set of backup records in a safe place. The backup should be stored away from the original set.

Keeping a backup set of records — including, for example, bank statements, tax returns, insurance policies home, etc. — is easier now that many financial institutions provide statements and documents electronically, and much financial information is available on the Internet. Even if the original records are provided only on paper, they can be scanned into an electronic format. With documents in electronic form, taxpayers can download them to a backup storage device, like an external hard drive, or burn them to a CD or DVD.

Document Valuables

Another step a taxpayer can take to prepare for disaster is to photograph or videotape the contents of his or her home, especially items of higher value. The IRS has a disaster loss workbook, [Publication 584](#), which can help taxpayers compile a room-by-room list of belongings.

A photographic record can help an individual prove the market value of items for insurance and casualty loss claims. Photos should be stored with a friend or family member who lives outside the area.

Update Emergency Plans

Emergency plans should be reviewed annually. Personal and business situations change over time as do preparedness needs. When employers hire new employees or when a company or organization changes functions, plans should be updated accordingly and employees should be informed of the changes.

Check on Fiduciary Bonds

Employers who use payroll service providers should ask the provider if it has a fiduciary bond in place. The bond could protect the employer in the event of default by the payroll service provider.

IRS Ready to Help

If disaster strikes, an affected taxpayer can call 1-866-562-5227 to speak with an IRS specialist trained to handle disaster-related issues.

Back copies of tax returns and all attachments, including Forms W-2, can be requested by filing [Form 4506, Request for Copy of Tax Return](#). Likewise, transcripts can be ordered using [Form 4506-T, Request for Transcript of Tax Return](#). Returns or transcripts can also be ordered by calling 1-800-829-1040.

There is no fee for a transcript or tax return copy for a taxpayer located in a federal disaster area qualifying for individual assistance. Taxpayers should put the assigned Disaster Designation in red ink at the top of the request form.

Related Items:

- [Tax Relief in Disaster Situations](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions for Disaster Victims](#)
- [Publication 552, Recordkeeping for Individuals](#)
- [Publication 583, Starting a Business and Keeping Records](#)